

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**
- **FINAL**
- **March 18, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

- Present: Members Allison, Brusch, Callanan, Epstein, Heigham, Libensen, Lynch, Millane, Paolillo, Widmer; BOS Chair Firenze, School Committee Chair Bowe

- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg

- Members Absent: Chair Curtis, Members Hofmann, McLaughlin, Smith

- The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm by Vice Chair Brusch.

- Vice Chair Brusch began the meeting by turning to the approval of minutes.

- ***Approval of Minutes of 3/11/2009***

- The minutes of 3/11/09 were approved, with one abstention.

- ***Update on Budget Process / Schools and Town***

- Vice Chair Brusch noted that the town has presented its available funds budget, and that School Committee Chair Bowe would present the schools' available funding budget tonight. She then asked BOS Chair Firenze if the available funds budget for the town presented by Town Administrator Younger was one that the BOS has approved? BOS Chair Firenze said that the BOS will meet soon to review and approve.

- ***Calendar for Extension of Town Meeting (TM) and Potential Ballot Question***

- Vice Chair Brusch turned to BOS Chair Firenze to inform the WC of the Board's vote on Monday evening regarding the scheduling of TM and a special election. BOS Chair Firenze: The Board voted to hold TM on Monday, June 1, with June 3 for a possible carry over night. There will be a special election scheduled for June 8th to vote on an operational override and maybe the Wellington debt exclusion. The BOS is not unanimous about voting on the two (Wellington and operational) at same time. The WC will present two budgets to TM on June 1st: one with override numbers built in and one without override numbers (available funds only). It is the Board's hope that both budgets will be approved and the town election will decide which budget will be used.

- It was noted that Monday, May 4th, is the deadline to finalized the override (e.g., amount, type, etc.) Member Widmer noted that there are five Wednesdays left before the April TM in which to frame for TM the budget conversation, to review all the Warrant articles, and to put two budgets together. Assistant Town Administrator Conti noted that the Warrant closes next Friday (3/27/2009). There are 37 articles, of those 8 pertain to zoning and some bylaw changes. Town Accountant Hagg asked about the deadline for a special TM to deal with FY09 issues. Mr. Conti will look into this. Vice Chair Brusch said that on April 1st, she would like to discuss the FY10 budget.

- SC Chair Bowe said that the school committee voted last night to move forward with the list of tiers for reductions to meet the available funds budget (\$3M in reductions). He said that the SC feels badly about this budget for the children of Belmont. He would like to revisit the budget split and or “use of free cash” conversation to avoid cutting all tiers. He added that a LABBB credit has been made available by issuing dividends this year. The expectation, SC Member Rittenberg added from the audience, is that this \$260K will be used for operating gaps. Vice Chair Brusch noted that the WC, the BOS, the Town Administrator, and the School Committee have known since January 28th that the budget assumes \$300K in state local aid to Belmont that requires legislative votes to raise taxes. Member Widmer concurred, adding that the state-wide meals and hotel tax state is money dedicated to local aid, but that tax has not been voted on yet. He said that the House budget will be a critical piece of information on what will happen to local aid. Belmont has assumed numbers based on the actual cherry sheet, but has not assumed a 10% reduction. Town Administrator Younger calculated that 7.7% was the reduction amount he used based on the cuts in local aid.

- ***Important Dates:***

- Vice Chair Brusch asked Town Accountant Hagg if the Retirement Board had indicated a date when they could come to the WC (not to coincide with the Electric Light Board). Ms. Hagg will have that date by next week. Vice Chair Brusch also laid out some dates and agenda items for the WC to make note of:

- **March 25th:** 9 C shortfall, snow fund short fall, reserve fund, collective bargaining timeline, and OPEB

- The WC will discuss on the 25th specifically how to close out the FY09 budget, including how to deal with the remaining \$145K that is short for FY09 due to the 9 C cuts. (The original shortfall was \$270.00, the town made \$125.00 in adjustments.) Also next week, the snow fund shortfall will be discussed – it could be over \$400K short. The reserve fund (which is presently at \$89K) will be discussed, as well.

- **April 1st:** The WC will discuss free cash (the split, how much to carry over, etc.) as well as the town and school budgets for FY10. The BOS will join the WC for this meeting.

- **April 8th** : The Light Board will present something to the WC that they plan to take to TM in April which could result in savings.

- **April 15th and 22nd**: The WC will need to opine on the Warrants and continue with FY10 budget issues as they relate to the April TM.

- Assistant Chair Brusch requested Town Accountant Hagg to send an email to all Department Heads to confirm what they may need to request regarding reserve fund transfers. Department heads will be asked to respond whether they have a request or not, and to respond by next week's meeting. This will help the WC plan for what funds they might need (to find) to cover potential requests.

ATFC Seminars

- There is a Spring Seminar in Andover on Monday, April 6th.

- On Thursday April 16th at 12:00 noon, the MMA will host a lunch meeting to discuss the stimulus funding. Whatever is known at that time will be presented. There is no fee for this event, but prior registration is required and the meeting is limited to finance committee members only.

Stimulus Discussion

- Vice Chair Brusch noted that it would be helpful if a small group of people were brought together and charged with keeping track of all pieces relating to the stimulus money, e.g., what is coming, the timeline, regulations, competitive grants, etc. The information is fluid, and people are asking everyday, "What is Belmont is getting?" Brusch is looking for this group to create a document that can be put on line and will explain to citizens how the various aspects of the stimulus program relates to Belmont.

Update from Town Administrator on Questions About Health Insurance

- Member Heigham moved that the WC enter into Executive Session at 8:37 to discuss collective bargaining and a legal issue. The Warrant Committee will not return to Open Session. A role call vote was taken and all members voted "aye" for Executive Session.

- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
- WC Recording Secretary